

**Written Testimony of
Mayor Timothy T. Stewart
The City of New Britain
Wednesday, March 12, 2008
Connecticut General Assembly - Public Health Committee**

HB 5903, An Act Concerning Drinking Water

As Mayor of the City of New Britain, I regret not being available to participate in today's important public hearing. Although I am not able to testify in person, I hope that the members of this committee will carefully consider the following written testimony in support of *HB 5903, An Act Concerning Drinking Water*.

You may remember that last year in the final days of the legislative session, a proposal was made by Tilcon that would have allowed the City of New Britain to consider entering into a lease agreement with Tilcon concerning 131 acres of land owned by New Britain that is located adjacent to the Tilcon quarry in Plainville. This proposal would have allowed Tilcon to continue its operations and extend the lifespan of their quarry operations. In exchange, New Britain would have received a payment of \$15 million dollars for the mineral rights to this land while still retaining ownership of the land.

In addition to the millions of dollars in much needed new revenue, the City of New Britain would have benefited from the donation of 95 acres of land for reservoir development, open space and/or watershed land and the creation of a new water storage reservoir with three times the capacity of New Britain's Shuttlemeadow Reservoir. By allowing the city to store additional water in this new reservoir, critical flood protection for New Britain residents living near the West Canal would have been improved. In the past, homeowners on Wiegands Drive have filed lawsuits against the city because of flood damage to their homes caused by the overflow of the West Canal during days of heavy rainfall. This new reservoir would help prevent future flood damage to these homes by capturing and storing rainfall that is currently lost and would continue to be lost if this land which is currently zoned for heavy industry is developed. In fact, this proposed reservoir will hold 4.7 billion gallons of water, compared to Shuttlemeadow's 1.5 billion gallons, and would increase the City of New Britain's yield by 160,000 gallons per day, serving up to 2000 people year round.

What you may not know is that Tilcon made a concentrated effort to work with environmental groups, the state Department of Public Health and the state Department of Environmental Protection in developing legislation that would offer many opportunities for public review and comment as well as an extensive list of local and state review and approvals. In fact, under the legislation passed in 2007, the City of New Britain would not have been allowed to move forward with this initiative until after the Department of Health approved a comprehensive environmental evaluation which would have also been reviewed by the Department of Public Utility Control and the Department of Environmental Protection. Moreover, the proposal would have been subject to three

public hearings and the lease and contract would have been scrutinized by the City of New Britain, Town of Plainville, the Inland Wetland Commissions of New Britain and Plainville, the City Plan Commission of New Britain and the Planning and Zoning Commission of Plainville

If passed, HB 5903 will give the City of New Britain, the Towns of Plainville and Southington and the state the rare opportunity to gain 275 acres of donated land as open space while supporting the development of a new drinking water reservoir. In addition, this important legislation will help Tilcon to continue making a significant contribution to the state's economy including more than 800 Connecticut jobs, an annual investment of \$40 million in wages and operating supplies, substantial state and local tax payments, as well as its continued support of many local charitable organizations.

It is critical for the Commissioner of Public Health to be allowed to study the use of class I and class II lands. Without HB 5903, the state and its residents may miss out on opportunities to consider proposals with substantial economic, environmental and natural resource benefits.